



JULIE  
Andreyev

greenroom



THE SURREY ART GALLERY TECHLAB PARC WITH CLOSED CIRCUIT  
INTERACTIVE PROJECTION FROM BEAR CREEK PARK

## INTRODUCTION

LIANE DAVISON

CURATOR, SURREY ART GALLERY

Visitors to Bear Creek Park in Surrey, or the waterfront parks of Granville Island in Vancouver, enjoy the scenery of these urban cultivated green spaces as they walk, or play. In *Greenroom's* virtual reality "parcs," visitors can observe these same spaces, but unlike the "real" parks, visitors are not just passive receptors of scenery. *Greenroom* visitors can play with the received image of the park, modifying their own personalized visual experience, and later collect, online, a souvenir picture or video postcard of themselves.

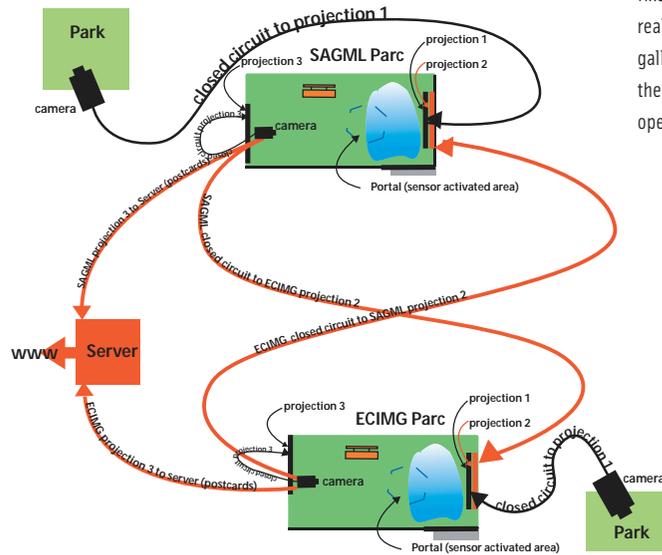
Julie Andreyev's project *Greenroom* presents a series of interfaces that mediate between contexts and interactions. The representation of outside (a real park) is layered within the inside (a mock park installation called a "parc"). Two sites (the Surrey Art Gallery TechLab and Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute Media Gallery) are linked together via high-speed, point-to-point Internet connection. Visitors' bodies serve as mobile agents, interacting directly with

technology, triggering electronic sensors. In the project's portal, both a site in the installation, and in the image captured by the cameras, visitors in each venue can see one another, broadcast in real time across the Internet. As well, the website <http://greenroom.info> presents another interface, and provides background and analysis of this project.

*Greenroom* is a virtual reality environment, an immersive artwork experienced as a wrap around installation of video projections and sculptural elements. Visitors, entering and moving around within *Greenroom*, activate hidden sensors which cause changes in the wall-to-wall video imagery. The image may zoom and degenerate in resolution, or fragment, revealing other imagery behind. A second video projection documents the visitors' experience in *Greenroom* and broadcasts it to its twin parc. When the portal is active with visitors monitored by the sensors and cameras, they can wave to visitors who are in the other parc.

*Greenroom* is a constructed landscape, mirroring the real with the digital, visually surrounding the visitor, but unlike most VR artwork, it's main objective is not to create the illusion of a "living" three-dimensional virtual picture, nor to impress visitors with a display of the latest in technology. Nor does it position the viewer as a passive receptor of the artwork. Rather it invites active participation of the viewer and their reflection on how simulations may be affecting our perception and expectations of reality. One of the critiques of digital culture is the degree to which we are enraptured while participating — whether playing games or surfing the Internet. Andreyev's *Greenroom* shows an appreciation of the

VIDEO PROJECTION AND  
INTERACTIVITY BETWEEN PARCS



aesthetics of digital media without succumbing to its dazzle. The representation of the park, for example, is not presented as a sparkling defined image, rather it is deliberately blurred and the video becomes almost painterly.

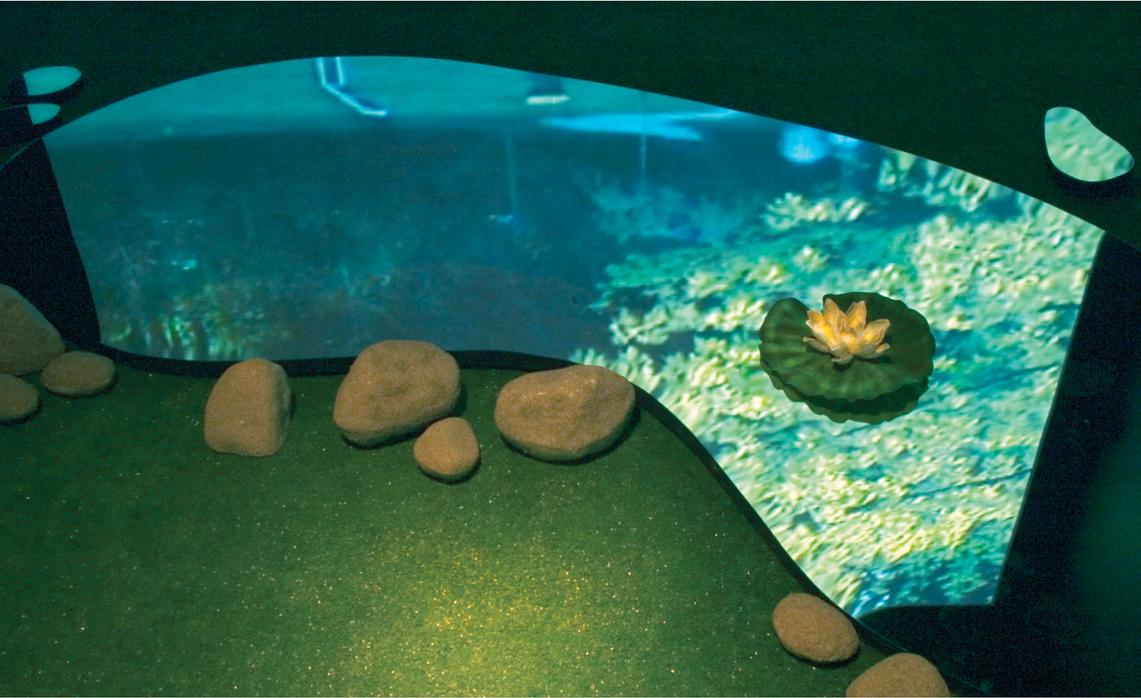
Projects such as *Greenroom* are indicative of a change in the nature of artwork and the experience of exhibitions enabled by digital technology. Visitors are invited (and expected) to act less as spectators and more as participants. The technical needs of such projects requires that the viewer shift from anticipating fixed, finished entities to participating in the realization or production of the artwork. The gallery becomes a flexible space, a kind of theatre of action, providing an immersive, open environment for experiences, for events.

VISITOR INTERACTING  
WITH VIDEO PROJECTION



# perceptions of landscape and the mobile observer

PETRA WATSON



THE POND WITH MIRRORED PROJECTION

*At the very least, it seems right to acknowledge that it is our shaping perception that makes the difference between raw matter and the landscape.<sup>1</sup>*

"Nature" is considered present in landscape as cultural forms: visual scenery, ancient trees, natural resources, and so on. Conditions of modernity and modernization introduced nature into the city within the controlled space of the urban park. Nature's existence in a park can be described as comparative to a museum: both spaces are controlled under specific aesthetics, conservation and preservation.

During the rise of early capitalism the rural countryside was no longer considered solely a place of agrarian production or medieval property relations. Landscape emerged as a way of seeing, a prospect or view — usually from a distance. Technological advances in geometry and surveying techniques contributed to the pictorial space of perspective that gave form and structure to landscape. As a way of seeing, perspective demanded a stationary subject.

Julie Andrejev's interactive installation *Greenroom* requires a mobile observer. The Media Gallery at Emily Carr Institute and the TechLab at the Surrey Art Gallery have been turned into interactive room-environments; spaces metaphorically and technologically referred to by Andrejev as "parcs." In the

rooms, video cameras record Bear Creek Park in Surrey and Granville Island in Vancouver. Each venue contains wall-size video projections with a sensor-activated area, or portal, which allows for image transmission to the other parc.

Three-dimensional objects are also placed in the parcs, and they establish their own spatial-temporal reading. The tree stump in the TechLab in the Surrey Art Gallery bears witness to a formerly present tree, while the rings of its cross-section mark the years of its growth. As 3-D sculpture, the tree now exists as representation, not as a living presence. A pond — as mirrored surface — is functional in guiding viewers to walk through the sensor activation area, and metaphorical in blending the reception of objective and subjective image exchange that runs through the spatial-temporal sensibilities of the work. Video postcards produced on-line from the visitor's interactivity assert a sense of "I was there," corresponding to the mobile sightseeing as a passage through to the other space, or the image exchange, referred to by Andrejev as "pass-thru." In the Media Lab at Emily Carr Institute, a garbage can marks space and time — full or empty — as a reference to the video image of the urban trash can in Bear Creek Park, now projected through the portal to the parc space of Emily Carr Institute. Also the digital image of the garbage can plays off the familiar icon of desktop "trash."

Strolling through the park, as seen through the projected image of Bear Creek Park, occurs on a winding path, which is an illusion in urban park design to a meandering stream. Planning principles integrate "nature" to compatible and contrasting edges of the urban. In this interactive work the images "pass-thru" digital space, taking the local through to global

network capabilities. This positions the production of nature as microenvironment, but also places nature as inseparable and vulnerable within the macro, or global world.

Urban influences interpret nature as a place for leisure activities. Landscape, as nature transformed, sets the stage for leisure activity. As the artist describes: "The 'parc' is an environment that technologically interfaces with the park as landscape. The projected area, called 'playground' is subject to sensory data and provides a collaborative space.... The playground is a meta-space and allows for telepresence between the parcs' visitors." Therefore, not just images are viewed through the temporal space of this installation, but a "living environment" is perceived through embodied space.

The urban park, therefore, is a cultural system. People are spatially accommodated (they walk); the experience is declared agreeable. The experience in the parc, however, does not give such ready gratification. When the observer in the parc begins to encounter the image of the "social nature" of the park — the people strolling and so on, the image breaks up, becoming remote. Images of the parks are now mediated over distance, yet closeness remains through interactive presence. Historically, landscape has been influenced by technological change; our perception of landscape is enriched through the image environment of this interactive installation.

The interactive space of the installation provides for an aesthetic of immersion: technology installs the observer in the picture. This interaction functions as "performance" — hence the apt title, *Greenroom*, which refers to the backstage room of a theatre, where the actor is able to prepare, rest and entertain. Comparable to the theatre, the location of the view or scene remains the same, but the experience and activity of the

installation changes with the passage of time. As the parc is a site-responsive environment, the participant activates the work, which then exists as a record of transformation, not as a graspable object or image per se.

In the installation, telepresence exists through the digitally generated exchange of an image passing through temporal space. Immersive spaces of representation have an extensive cultural history before contemporary new media. During the seventeenth century, Baroque room-environments venerated nature as an earthly representation of sensuous pleasure. In the nineteenth century, the very popular panoramas claimed to represent the real through "nature at a glance."<sup>2</sup> The diorama applied gradual changes in lighting to a transparent and illuminated surface. Both the panorama and the diorama used a semi-darkened room, so the image space enclosed and transformed the observer's perception without contact with the external world. The diorama's main concern was to address the passage of time as representation. This temporal unfolding of optical experience and different scenes through light effects incorporated the transitions from day to night, the changing of seasons, or natural disasters, com-

WINDOW PROJECTION OF  
THE PARC'S INTERIOR

paratively cultural forms of nature. Spatial transformation in which the observer is a component is central to *Greenroom*; the observer "travels" through space and time, and landscapes no longer contain tangible boundaries, but are spaces of exchange.

Andreyev acknowledges the influence of the video environments of New York artist Dan Graham. During the 1970s Graham produced a significant number of artworks that explored relations between perception, audiences and space, through the use of video and mirrors to reflect present time.<sup>3</sup>

The interactivity of embodied real time that is central to Andreyev's installation draws from new technologies generated through popular VJ (video jockey) and video-chat cultures. The semi-darkened environments of club culture and Andreyev's parc set the "scene" for the embodied observer to embrace the image space. This interactive process is a form of "sightseeing." Within the interactive spaces of the parks/parcs, barriers are broken down between the work of art and the material



world, and, in fact, between image and space. Such spatial shifting was used by Graham's "low-tech" video exchange.

Terminology that refers to space and navigation is central to the larger system of digital information flow: e-mail systems, chat rooms, multiplayer game worlds and search engines. The same elements — space and navigation — are central to the experiences of the aesthetic interface and relations of perception and embodiment that emerge in *Greenroom*.

1 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Vintage Canada Edition, 1996), p.10.

2 Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1997).

3 Dan Graham, *Selected Writings by Dan Graham* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1999). *Dan Graham, Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects 1965-1990* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1993). These publications provide an overview of Graham's video installations and other works.



THE TREE STUMP  
IN THE PARC

## julie andrejev

Julie Andrejev's work is influenced by forms of popular entertainment and car cultures, and interactive, mobile technologies. The most recent projects involve multi-media interactive cars: *Four-Wheel Drift 1* was performed in 2004 at Interactive Futures, Victoria Independent Film and Video Festival. In 2003, *VJ-Fleet* was performed in the New Forms Festival in Vancouver and shown at: ORB//Remote: Global Scrambling, 2003, Copenhagen, Denmark; at MAD '03NET 2nd International Meeting of Experimental Arts in Madrid, where it received a Project Award; and at the 7th Japan Media Arts Festival, Tokyo in 2004. *VJ-Fleet* was nominated for a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) Interactive Arts Installation Award. *Four-Wheel Drift (re-mix)* was performed during her residency at Splintermind, Stockholm in Spring 2004, sponsored by the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art. Andrejev was recently awarded a Strategic Research Grant, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Andrejev is an Associate Professor at the Emily Carr Institute of Art, Design & Media.  
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## acknowledgments

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*Ian Cochrane*

Sound Production

## JULIE ANDREYEV: GREENROOM

**Surrey Art Gallery** April 17 - July 25, 2004

**Emily Carr Institute Media Gallery** June 13 - July 25, 2004

<http://greenroom.info>

### **Surrey Art Gallery**

13750 - 88 Avenue at King George Highway

Surrey, BC V3W 3L1

Phone: 604-501-5566

[artgallery@city.surrey.bc.ca](mailto:artgallery@city.surrey.bc.ca)

[www.arts.city.surrey.bc.ca](http://www.arts.city.surrey.bc.ca)

[www.surreytechlab.ca](http://www.surreytechlab.ca)

The Surrey Art Gallery is located in the Surrey Arts Centre near the corner of 88 Avenue and King George Highway in Bear Creek Park. The Gallery is a short bus ride (#321) from the Surrey Central Skytrain Station or a 25-minute walk south from the King George Skytrain Station.

### **Emily Carr Institute**

1399 Johnston Street,

Granville Island,

Vancouver, BC V6H 3R9

Phone: 604-844-3800

<http://www.eciad.bc.ca/>

<http://cat.eciad.bc.ca/>

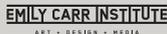
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